THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) The Government has seen some reports in the Indian and Pakistani media on possible denial of visas to Indian journalists for travel to Pakistan for the coverage of Parliamentary elections in that country.

(b) The Indian media is free to travel abroad and to approach foreign missions for visas without any prior permission from MEA. It is, therefore, not possible for the Government to furnish any credible factual information as sought by the Hon'ble Member of Parliament.

(c) Does not arise in view of (b).

Assistance to Afghanistan

954. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of air buses, aircrafts India has gifted to Afghanistan, recently;

(b) the number of passenger buses that India has given to that country; and

(c) the details of the other assistance provided by India to Afghanistan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) An agreement was signed on 2nd September 2002 between the Government of India, Air India, Transitional Islamic Government of Afghanistan and Arina Afghan Airlines for gifting three aircraft from Air India to Ariana Afghan Airlines.

(b) 50 buses have been provided to the Afghan government for public transport in Kabul city.

(c) India has provided extensive humanitarian, financial and project assistance to Afghan reconstruction. Out of the total financial commitment of US$10 million for reconstruction and rehabilitation projects in Afghanistan, US$10 million was transferred to the Afghan government as budget subsidy. Prime Minister has also approved a sum of US$ 10 million for various projects related to Afghanistan. Some of the major projects that have been implemented include supply of medical stores and medical

services; artificial limbs center in Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif; training of two batches of Afghan diplomats, Afghan Police Officers, journalists, Afghan officials from the office of Afghan President, and Afghan doctors; deputation of English language teachers to Afghanistan; computerization of Afghan Foreign Ministry; setting up of computer training center in Kabul; supply of vegetable seeds to Afghanistan, and supply of over 8000 educational kits to school children of Habibia School.

During his visit to Afghanistan on 10-12 August 2002, EAM had also announced an assistance package of US$ 4 million each for the rehabilitation of Habiba School and Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health. Governmet is also supplying over 9500 tonnes of high protein biscuits for the school feeding programme from a part of 1 million tonnes of wheat pledged by India for Afghanistan.

Government has been associated with various international efforts aimed at promoting reconstruction, reconciliation and stability in Afghanistan, including Ministerial level Tokyo meeting on Afghan reconstruction; Afghan Support Group meetings; Bonn process, Emergency Loya Jigra; meetings held in Geneva to discuss rebuilding of Afghan security structures and meeting of foreign Ministers held in New York on Afghanistan on 13th September, 2002.

North Korean Help to Pakistan

955. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Pakistan has been clandestinely helped North Korea in its nuclear programme;

(b) whether India brought this matter to the notice of the USA; and

(c) what steps have been taken to declare Pakistan as terrorist State?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Government have seen recent reports about Pakistan having helped North Korea in latter's nuclear weapons programme in exchange for transfer of ballistic missile technology.

(b) US Secretary of State Colin Powell stated in an interview that he had conveyed the US concerns about North Korea's nuclear programme